



Julius Nyerere, 1922-1999

## Julius Nyerere

In his 1962 pamphlet, *Ujamaa – the Basis of African Socialism*, Nyerere begins: “Socialism – like democracy – is an attitude of mind.”

This was a few months after the Independence of Tanganyika, and Julius Nyerere was the country’s first President.

“African Socialism” was mostly a swindle, but here, probably, and also in the opinion of Ngugi wa Thiong’o as we have seen, Julius Nyerere was expressing a conviction held in good faith.

Nyerere believed that socialism was an attitude of mind, perhaps comparable to the imaginary “milk of human kindness”. He believed that socialism was entirely a subjective condition.

We will ponder, in the case of Thomas Sankara, the assassinated president of Burkina Faso, whether such a subjective kind of socialism, which Sankara also espoused, and which is neither rooted in science nor in international solidarity, is not always doomed to defeat.

Julius Nyerere was respected by relatively-more-scientific socialists like Ngugi for the remainder of his life, and under Nyerere's leadership his country played a heroic role as a front-line state against Apartheid, Portuguese and Rhodesian colonialism.

Walter Rodney also apologised for Nyerere in his 1972 essay, “Tanzanian *Ujamaa* and Scientific Socialism” ([click here](#)). Rodney thought that Ujamaa was *de facto* revolutionary, if not consciously so.

Tanganyika combined with Zanzibar in 1964 to become Tanzania. As Tanzania it was host to many liberation movements and from the late 1970s was host to the ANC's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College. As Tanzania it adopted the famous Arusha Declaration of 1967. These things are major parts of the dual history of socialist ideas in Africa, and of pan-African solidarity.

Read these two documents to discover part of Tanzania's struggle with the meaning of socialism in circumstances where almost the entire population was made up of peasants.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Julius Nyerere, Ujamaa - The Basis of African Socialism, 1962](#), and [Julius Nyerere, Arusha Declaration, 1967](#).
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